

5  
T W O 2  
SERMONS

Preach'd against

*Immorality and Profaneness.*

The First,

On *January* 13. 169<sup>8</sup><sub>2</sub>.

The Second,

On *May* 3. 1700.

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By JOHN THANE, M. A.  
And one of the Prebendaries of *Chester*.

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L O N D O N:

Printed for R. Knaplock, at the *Angel* and  
*Crown* in *St. Paul's Church-yard*, 1700.

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The First

On January 13. 1698

The Second

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By JOHN TILN E. M. A.  
And one of the Prebendaries of Exeter.

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Printed for R. Knapp, at the Angel and  
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Two Sermons Preach'd against  
 he himself was about to undertake, but of  
 that like will which he did repulse himself  
 that had a Mind to be his Followers, and  
 would engage themselves in his Service.  
 If any Man serve me, let him follow me,  
 and where I am, there shall also my Ser-  
**SERMONS**

As if he had said, "I am now about to  
 Preach'd against  
 drink off the chalice of the sins of  
 Mankind have prepared for me; and since  
 that for this I must come into the  
**Immorality and Profaneness**  
 for its sake, let not any of my servants  
 be of such a mind as to think of turning  
 back, or of their being led to follow  
 me, I will break with them upon these  
 terms: **St. JOHN, xii. 26.**

**If any Man serve me, him  
 will my Father honour,**

**T**Here are the Words of our blessed  
 Saviour, and they contain part of  
 the Discourse wherewith he en-  
 tertain'd two of his Disciples,  
 Andrew and Philip, who came upon a par-  
 ticular Message to him. It was now about  
 the time, as appears from the Context,  
 when his Sorrows began, and the Scene of  
 his Sufferings was drawing on; from the  
 Prospect whereof he takes Occasion to in-  
 form his Auditors, not only of that which  
 A 2 he

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he himself was about to undertake, but of that likewise which he did require from all that had a Mind to be his Followers, and would ingage themselves in his Service. *If any Man serve me, let him follow me, and where I am, there shall also my Servant be: If any Man serve me, him will my Father honour.*

As if he had said, "I am now about to drink off that bitter Cup, which the Sins of Mankind have prepared for me; and since that for this very End, I came into the World, that I might lay down my Life for its sake, let not any of my Servants grudge or think it strange to tread in the steps of their Master, and to follow his Example. Many I foresee there are who will break with me upon these Terms, and will refuse to become my Disciples and Followers; but know ye that blessed and only blessed shall they be, who upon the Preaching of my Gospel shall come in, and believe in me, and receive my Doctrine, and shall yield Obedience to my Laws and Commands. Happy I say again shall it be for them, if they will learn of me, and will Practice the Rules of my Religion, for these are they whom I will own and defend, and these are they whom my Father also will honour.

Having thus briefly consider'd the Occasion of the Words, I come now to raise some



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some Observations from them: And they shall be these Five.

**I.** I shall inquire into the Nature and Kind of the Service which is here offer'd in the Text, *If any Man serve me.*

**II.** I shall also inquire who they are that may properly be called the Servants of Christ.

**III.** I shall shew the Reasonableness of the Service.

**IV.** The Necessity of it. And;

**V.** And lastly, from these Words of our Lord, *him will my Father honour.* I shall by way of Encouragement set before you that immense Reward which attends the sincere Performance of it.

**I.** Then as to the Nature and Kind of the Service. And that will appear, if we consider what it is, and wherein it doth consist.

If we inquire into the nature of the Service, we shall find it to consist of these two Parts: *Viz.* A firm well-grounded Assent to whatever Christ has reveal'd, and a sincere actual Conformity to those manifold Obligations and Duties which he

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hath laid upon us. So that to serve Christ is briefly this, to believe what he has Deliver'd, and to do what he hath Commanded in his Word. Whence the Consequence is plain and undoubted, that as long as we faithfully Perform the Service, so long and no longer will Christ Own us for his Servants: Which should make us so much the more Cautious and Circumspect in our behaviour towards him.

But then if we consider it as to its kind, we cannot but acknowledge it to be best and properest for us, most besitting us as we are Men, and are endow'd with a rational Nature; As it gives us a clearer Sense of our frail and weak Condition, and what forlorn and miserable Creatures Sin hath made us: As it presents us with right Notions of God and of his Worship, and with the plainest and surest Directions for the Government of our selves: As it delivers us from the Tyranny and Bondage of Sin, and from the Power of our Lusts, and instead thereof puts us into a State of Sonship and Freedom, under the Influence of God's Grace, and the Conduct of his Holy Spirit, whereby our Understandings are enlighten'd, and our Wills directed, and our Affections are brought into order. So that neither our profest Enemies from without, nor our treacherous Friends from within, shall now be able to hurt us without

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without our own consent. A farther Account of whose Excellence we have in the Words of S. Paul, 1. Cor. 6. 9. *Know ye not that the unrighteous shall not inherit the Kingdom of God? Be not deceived, neither Fornicators, nor Adulterers, nor Drunkards, shall inherit the Kingdom of God: And such were some of you: But ye are washed, but ye are Sanctified, but ye are Justified in the Name of the Lord Jesus, and by the Spirit of our God.*

Since then the Nature of Christ's service is such, since it is so Excellent in its kind, and every way so much for our Advantage, is it not very plain that 'tis not more our Duty, than it is our Interest and our Happiness, to accept it, and live according to it: And if so, how inexcusable then are those, who after they have taken upon them this Service, and have vow'd Allegiance to their Lord and Master, do notwithstanding rise in Rebellion against him, and Affront him to his very Face. Which all such most certainly do, who by their Actions or their Speeches, or perhaps both, disown his Authority, and despise his Laws, and by that means endeavour to represent the Son of God as a Cheat and Impostor.

These are the Men that are in the Interests of Irreligion and Infidelity, which they serve most faithfully, and to the best of their Power: Who tho' they have wholly

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abandon'd themselves to Vice, and have quite cast off all Modesty and Shame, have yet so much Assurance as to set up for Wits, and pretend to a more refin'd way of Conversation. These are they who judge of things not as they really are, but according to their own ill-grounded Sentiments and Principles, which teach them to think it mean and unbecoming, to be ty'd up to Rules, and be oblig'd to live as all sober considering Men chuse to do. It seems for their Part, they know better than to trouble themselves with Religion, or the Obligations of Virtue and Morality, which to say the Truth, they have no manner of regard or reverence for. If you inquire into these Men's pretences, as they are seldom without some, they will tell you they have thoroughly studied the Point, and have Search'd into the Reason and Nature of things, and are thence clearly Convinc'd that Religion, especially the Christian Religion, is at best but a *cunningly devised Fable*. This is the Scheme which they have projected to themselves, and by such wild Notions do they steer and govern their Actions: And what is stranger yet, seem to despise all others that are not as wicked as themselves. Set the *Men in Black*, as they in derision call Us, say whate'er they can, they are resolv'd notwithstanding to pursue their Pleasures, and gratifie their Senses,



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Senses, and will never stint themselves in any thing that Nature prompts them to. A

And now is it not high time to give a Check to such avowed and barefac'd Impiety, which sets up in defiance of God himself, and which strikes at the Foundation of his Honour and Authority in the World. This is what we are called upon to do, and there is absolute need that it should be done, and doubtless every good Man will contribute to the doing of it. For who can be silent when Religion is insulted, or unconcern'd when Libertinism is in Fashion and Request?

But as this kind of behaviour is very unaccountable, so it is commonly fatal in the Event, and will certainly prove so to the Sinners of this Nation, except they repent. Because their Sins are more provoking, and do carry a deeper Guilt, as being Committed against clearer Light, and more and greater Advantages, than are afforded to other Christians: And Our Saviour we know hath said, *Unto whomsoever much is given, of him shall much be required.* When therefore Men have all the Means and Opportunities, and all the Encouragement to Piety and Goodness that can be desired, and yet nevertheless turn such Miscreants, and give such Scandalous Ill Examples, it looks as if God had some heavy Judgment in store for us, and that

we



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we were a People devoted to Destruction. After that God hath shew'd himself so often and so tenderly concern'd for this our *Sion*, what else is to be expected from such base unworthy Returns, but that he should pronounce the same of the *English* that he once did of the *Jewish Church*, *Isai. 5. 4.* *What could have been done more to my Vineyard that I have not done in it? Wherefore when I looked that it should bring forth Grapes; brought it forth wild Grapes? And now go to, I will tell you what I will do to my Vineyard, I will take away the Hedge thereof, and it shall be earen up, and break down the Wall thereof, and it shall be trodden down: And I will lay it waste, it shall not be pruned or digged, but there shall come up Briars and Thorns.*

But to return; Religion or the Service of *Jesus Christ* doth justly challenge our best care and regard, for that it enjoyns nothing but what is highly becoming, nothing but what our own Reason tells us we ought to do. It lays upon us strict Engagements to Holiness and Virtue, which are Conditions absolutely required on our part: So that whenever we depart or break off from our Duty, and enter on a contrary Course of Sin and Disobedience, we become as it were Vagrants and Fugitives, and may very properly be said to run away from our Master.

Since

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Since then we have all Solemnly engaged at our Baptism, not only to be True and Constant to Christ's Service, but also to Deny our selves, and Hazard all for his sake, let us resolve to make good that our Promise, lest when he shall come again to Judge the World, we should then be found Guilty, and accordingly have Sentence passed on us as Renegades and Deserters. I come now in the Second Place,

I. To inquire who they are that may properly be called the Servants of Christ.

Now to make us the Servants of Christ two things are required.

1. That we believe in Christ, and believing Love, Honour and Adore him as the Son of God, and the Saviour of Mankind.

2. That we so receive all his Laws and Commands as to make them the only Rule of our Obedience and Practice.

This is the Substance of our Duty, as we are Christians, and if we are sincere in the performance of it, and will do the best we can to please God, his Grace will ever be ready to assist us, and to supply our Defects. So that now we know who and what the Servants of Christ are, namely, All such who own Christ for their Lord, and in Obedience to his Authority submit themselves to be govern'd according to his Will and Pleasure. This is a short and plain

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Account of the Matter, and is that which every one that makes any Pretence to Christianity must acknowledge to be true.

And if what I have here said be true, as certainly it is, then what a fatal mistake are they Guilty of, who think they can serve Christ well enough, while they continue in a State of Sin, and go on in a constant Course of Wickedness and Vice? For what a strange Contradiction is this, and how is it possible for these men to reconcile their Belief and their Practice together? Do they imagine that Christ will alter the Terms of Salvation, and will account them as Servants, who are no better than Rebels and Out-Laws? If Christ himself will Condemn those who only call him, *Lord*, without ever doing the things which he hath said, then what a severe Doom do they deserve, who are so far from giving him any such outward Verbal Respect, that they make no Scruple openly to Affront and Revile him?

Blessed God! what a strange Degeneracy do we now see in the Faith and Manners of most Christians, and to what a low ebb and despised Estate is Christianity, the best and most perfect Institution, reduc'd! That very Religion which heretofore seiz'd on the Hearts and Affections of Men, and presently brought them off from

from Idols and other Heathen Fopperies, and which insensibly ingag'd the most rude, and fierce, and stubborn Dispositions: And not only so, but moreover inspir'd them with such Zeal for the Truth and Purity of it, as made vast Numbers of its Professors, chuse to Sacrifice their Lives, rather than renounce and betray it. How is *that* Religion now become the Scorn of Fools, and the Sport of the Wicked and the Profane! And how are the Holy Scriptures vilify'd by Seducers, and the Truths therein contain'd render'd of no Account or Consideration by them? So that all things put together, who could believe such a Change as now is, did not Experience shew it, or even think it morally possible, had not our *Lord* himself foretold it?

That there are too many Examples of this Kind, I need not say much to prove, since the very Complexion of the Age doth abundantly evince it.

Behold then on the one hand the *Theist*, or Moral Believer, who is so far from being a Christian, that he calls in Question the Truth and certainty of reveal'd Religion. This is a sort of Men who pretend it seems to more than ordinary strictness and reservedness of Conversation, and so far indeed they deserve to be commended: But then, alas! what can *these* signify alone to us now, without Faith, and without a Redeemer?



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Redeemer? Next to the *Therist* comes the bold *Socinian* Controvertist, one who laughs at the Doctrine of the Trinity, and flatly denies the Divinity of our Lord and Saviour. And tho' both Scripture and Antiquity are plain against him, yet so highly conceited is he of his own little *Reason*, that he sticks not to prefer it even to *Fathers* and *Councils*. This also is a growing Mischief, a spreading Infection, and therefore the Danger it threatens is so much the greater: For if once Men be permitted to vent such false and pernicious Doctrines, what else is to be look'd for, but that all should at last end in Scepticism, or downright Infidelity?

Look again on the other hand, and see where the *Blasphemer* appears, who not content by a lewd and debauch'd Life, to crucifie his Master afresh, and put him to open shame, strives all he can to attacque him in his Person, and pursues him to the very Seat of Majesty and Glory. This is the way and the behaviour of him, who is said by the Psalmist, *Psal. 73: 9. to set his Mouth against the Heavens.*

With the Blasphemer we may joyn the *Profane* Person, as being next akin to him. And here again the Scene is Dismal enough, since it presents us with nothing, but the bold Flights and Extravagancies of a profane Temper, which as it is too visible in ma-



ny of the Youth of our Nation, especially those who are in some repute for Parts and Education, so it is very Industriously Propagated by others, who take a pride in exposing Religion, and drawing Men off to Infidelity and Vice. And tho' none perhaps who are Guilty in this way have Actually renounc'd Christianity, yet they appear on all Occasions with such an Air of Lightness, and are so mightily addicted to this abominable kind of Railery, that neither God himself, nor his Son *Jesus* Christ, nor any the most Serious and Sacred things can escape them. This is another Evil that ought speedily to be remedied, else the Contagion will spread amain.

Next to these stands the *common and Profane Swearer*, one indeed who is much better known to us, as coming oftner in our way, and meeting us almost where-soever we go. This, alas, is become so common and so reigning a Vice, and which hath spread it self so wide, and hath got such mighty Numbers on its side, that 'tis much to be fear'd it will not so easily be rooted out. However, we may still hope to put a stop to it in some measure, if fit and proper Remedies be duly apply'd. 'Tis true, the meaner sort of People are generally tainted with this Evil, but then none can so effectually cure it in them as the

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the Magistrate: As for those of Quality and Condition, 'tis to be hop'd that a little Consideration will shew them the Odiousness and Silliness of this Vice, and will let them see how Contrary this Custom is to good Sense and good Breeding, and will likewise convince them that it is altogether as unbecoming the *Gentleman* as the *Christian*. Such commonly have great Advantages above Ignorant Inferior People, and consequently would they but consider, as it becomes them to do, the *Being* and *Nature* of God, if they have any Sense at all of Religion, they cannot but own that the Divine Majesty is highly affronted, while they make thus bold with his Name upon every vain and trifling Occasion.

Much more I confess might be said to expose this horrid Crime, which is become so very rife not only in this, but in most other Countries, especially where the *Romish* Religion prevails, but I forbear, because I would not be tedious.

There are two sorts of Sinners still behind, *The Intemperate* and the *Lascivious*: I have chosen to mention these both together, because tho' they may sometimes act singly and apart, yet they very often meet in one and the same Person. For when by Drinking over-much, or as *Solomon's* Expression is, by *Tarrying long at the Wine*, the Head is intoxicated, and the Blood

Blood inflam'd, then Lust seizes the Man,  
and the brutish Appetite prevails. And  
here I cannot but observe, that as un-  
reasonable as these Vices are in themselves,  
and as unbecoming the Faith and Profes-  
sion of Christianity, they have never-  
theless been a long while in Vogue and  
Repute among us, and the Frequency  
of the Commission seems in part to have  
lessen'd the Reproach which is justly due  
to them. For what more common than  
for the Drunkard to pass only for a plea-  
sant Companion, or for an honest and  
good-natur'd Fellow, one that does no  
Body any harm, and the like? And then  
again as to the Lewd Person, how or-  
dinary a thing is it to hear him cry'd  
up for a fine Gentleman, and a Wit, and  
a Man of Intrigue? All which in the  
Cast of Libertines pass for Titles of Ho-  
nour, and seem to denote the best and  
highest Accomplishments.

Thus have these two Excellent Virtues,  
*Temperance* and *Chastity*, which do so  
properly belong to Christians, been in a  
manner discountenanc'd chiefly by the  
Force and Power of Example. But for  
all that, Intemperance and Uncleaness are  
Sins still, and such Sins as will finally ex-  
clude Men from the Kingdom of Heaven.  
God no doubt intended by the Laws and  
Religion of his Son to restrain Men from  
both

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all manner of Sensuality, especially those gross Excesses and Impurities, to which the *Gentiles* had universally addicted themselves; And accordingly God is said by the Apostle *to have called us not unto Uncleanneſs, but unto Holineſs, 1 Theſſ.*

4. 7. Thus St. Peter also warns the new Converts, *To live no longer in the Flesh, to the Luſts of Men, but to the Will of God, 1 Pet. 4. 2.* This is the Evidence which the Scripture gives us, and if we believe it to be true, nothing can be plainer than that the Practice of these Sins, as harmless as some may think them, is enough to endanger their Salvation.

Nay, if we consider these Men with respect to this World, what would become of these fashionable Sinners, were St. Paul's Rule once put in Practice? If any Man, says he, *that is called a Brother, that is, a Christian, be a Fornicator, or a Drunkard, with such a one, no not to eat, 1 Cor. 5. 11.* How would such an Injunction as this shock most of the fine Wits and Gallants of our Days? The Apostle, tis true, did give this Advice, or rather Command, to the Christians at *Corinth*, which was as loose and debauch'd a Place as any at that time; but still I much question whether such Discipline could be practis'd among us now. And yet 'twere but reasonable in my Opinion that some kind



kind of Disgrace should be fix'd upon them by Publick Authority, and that for the sake and out of respect to Religion, which can never have that Influence upon Men which it ought to have, while such Crimes as these are committ'd at and suffer'd to go unpunish'd.

I am sensible that a great deal more might be said upon these Heads, but I fear I have almost tir'd your Patience in this representing the Blemishes and Deformities of Humane Nature. But you will pardon me, since I had no other Design in exposing them, but only in order to correct and reform them.

And that we may effectually do so, what other or better course can we take than to consult our own Reason, which will easily discover to us the infinite Scandal as well as Danger of such Practices, which are so odious to God, and so detestable among all wise and good Men. This will teach us rightly to compare things, and make a true judgment of them, and will plainly Demonstrate to us, that to live Viceously, is indeed to live wisely, and like Men, and according to the Dignity of our Nature. That if we would in good earnest approve our selves the Servants of Christ, and do all those things which he hath commanded, what an agreeable and de-



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lightful Change there would suddenly  
 appear in the World. The truth is, we  
 may easily deceive and abuse our selves;  
 but when all is said, we must either be  
 Christ's Servants, or the Devils Slaves,  
 either the Laws of Christ must rule and  
 govern us, or else Sin will have the Do-  
 minion over us: According to that Apho-  
 rism I spoke by our Saviour to the Jews,  
*Whosoever committeth Sin, is the Servant*  
*of Sin;* John 8. 34. And St. Paul is like-  
 wise very expresse to the same purpose.  
*Know ye not that to whomsoever ye yield*  
*your selves servants to obey, his Servants ye*  
*are to whom ye obey, whether of Sin unto*  
*Death, or of Obedience unto Righteousness,*  
*Rom. 6. 16.* Which brings me to the  
 Third Thing I observ'd from the Words,  
 and that is the Reasonableness of the  
 Service. I observe it as well as I can  
 I Had Christianity nothing beside the  
 Authority of its Founder, to recommend  
 and inforce the Practice of it, even that  
 alone were sufficient of it self. Hast  
 Thou said then, O Blessed Jesu, if any Man  
 serve me, him will my Father honour;  
 and can any Man deny to serve Thee?  
 Hast Thou moreover done and suffer'd  
 so very much for the wretched Sons of  
 Men, and will any of them refuse to be-  
 come obedient to thy Will? Nay, hast  
 Thou ascertain'd so ample a Reward upon  
 thy

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thy Word and Promise, and will not every one gladly accept this so kind, this so gracious an Overture?

No; Thousands still there are who will not be persuaded for all that, who will not understand their true Interest, but rather chuse to make themselves Slaves, than to live as the Sons of God, and Freeman of Christ. Stupid and ungrateful Sinner! What hath bewitch'd thee into this Treachery and Disobedience to the best of Masters? How canst thou answer these thy Doings, even to thy own Ingenuity and Conscience? Dost thou imagine thou shalt find thy Account sooner or better in serving thy own Lusts, and gratifying thy unreasonable and unlawful Desires, than in keeping the Laws of God, and obeying his most just and reasonable Commands? If thou art really of this Mind, know then that thy Case is desperate, since thou art not like to be undeceiv'd, till it be too late for thee to return and repent.

'Tis true, indeed, Christ hath invited us all into his Service, but then he justly expects that whoever will become his Servants, should strictly observe the Rules and Orders of his House: Which is no more than what is commonly practis'd, and thought to be very reasonable among Men. Which Rules of his no

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one amongst us can be ignorant of but by his own Fault: For the Word of Truth lyes open to all, and every one may see and learn from thence what he is particularly oblig'd unto. Let none of us therefore scruple or boggle at any thing that Christ hath thought fit to command us: Let us not stand upon Terms with our Lord, nor expect that we should pick and chuse our own Work: Besure so wise a Master would require nothing of his Servants, but what is fit to be done by them; nothing but what is certainly very good and proper, and even necessary for us in all Conditions: So that if after all his Kindness to us, we are still wilful and perverse, and are resolv'd to serve our Lusts, and to continue in our Sins, what can in reason be expected, but that we should be turn'd out of our Service, and immediately be deliver'd over to the power of the Devil?

But I am willing to hope *better things of you all, and things that accompany salvation*, because there is so much Reason for it; because there is such Agreeableness and Satisfaction in the Practice of Religion and Virtue. Which makes me wonder the more how it comes to pass, that Men otherwise of very good Sense and Understanding, and who have had  
all

all the Advantages of an ingenious and liberal Education, should after such fair and promising beginnings turn errant Debauchees, and thereby defeat all the Hopes which their Relations, or Friends, or Country, might conceive of them. But Wisdom is justified of her Children, and Religion will always approve it self to the judicious and sober part of Mankind: The Nature of whose Service is such, that whatever our Circumstances are in the World, if we would distinguish our selves, and excel in any degree, we cannot possibly miss of our Aim, so long as we keep constant to our Rule.

IV. The *Fourth* Thing to be consider'd is the Necessity of the Service.

There is undoubtedly a Necessity laid upon us all of being Good, and Virtuous, and Holy, and no Pretence whatsoever has Power to take off the Obligation: Tho' some perhaps will be apt to say, They cannot leave off this or that particular Sin: They have try'd as they pretend, and have done whatever they could, but it seems all in vain: The reason is, they have indulg'd themselves so long in the Practice of Sin, that it is become in a manner natural to them, so that they hardly perceive when they commit it. Thus it too often happens in the case of profane Swearing and Cursing. Again,

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Another perhaps will tell you, for his part he is very sensible that Intemperance is a great Sin, but for all that he is not able to resist the Charms of Wine and good Company; besides that, he has been so long and so deeply engag'd in this way, and has contracted such and so many Acquaintance, that he knows not how to get fairly off: The Man perhaps is not so much satisfied in what he does, as unwilling to thwart his corrupt Inclination.

The lewd Person no doubt has his Pretences too as well as the former, but these are for the most part such as are not so fit to be mention'd.

Now the Case of these Men is certainly very bad, and their Condition is highly deplorable, and that because they trifle and are unconcern'd about the main Issue, and have not that inward affecting Sense of the Danger which they ought to have. Were they once made sensible of that, they would quickly forego their vicious Practices; but then here lyes the Difficulty, that when Men's Impieties have proceeded thus far, the Commands of God's Word, and the Terrors and Threatnings of the Gospel, are too gentle an Application for the Cure of them: And therefore some more effectual Methods are to be taken, such as may thoroughly awaken Sinners, and may convince them of their Wickedness and Folly, and



and engage them to become Modest and Temperate, Sober and Religious, or at least restrain them from breaking out into open Lewdness and Debauchery.

'Tis therefore a very proper Remedy which Solomon prescribes, *a Rod for the Fool's Back*; 'tis seasonable doubtless and useful too in this Case: For when Men are so bent upon Wickedness that they will not grow better by Reproof, 'tis requisite some kind of Discipline should be exercised upon them: When they are so harden'd in Sin that neither Religion nor Reason will reduce them, they should then be made to feel the Censure of the Law. This is the most likely Method of effecting that Work, which Charity as well as Prudence requires to be done: And the rather, because a little Severity, when rational Motives and Persuasives fail, is the truest sort of Kindness that can be shew'd to such Men: Who, if they are let alone in their Extravagancies, will soon grow Heady and Licentious, and will not be stopp'd in their Career, till at last they *give themselves over unto Lasciviousness, to work all Uncleaness with Greediness, Ephes. 4. 19.*

The Truth is, when I consider the Circumstances we are in, as to the abounding of Vice and Immorality, it cannot but seem strange that it should be so: That Religion,

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gion, which is the chief Interest and Happiness of Mankind, should be so little regarded as it is in the World : That Virtue should be so much discountenanc'd, and Sobriety and Temperance so rarely seen : That Men should thus prostitute their Reason, and affront and baffle their Understanding, and at the same time should value themselves upon such Management as this : This, I say, could not but seem very strange, were it not that *the God of this World*, 2 Cor. 4. 4. whom they have so faithfully serv'd, *hath blinded the Eyes of their Mind*, and will not suffer *the Light of Truth to shine clearly unto them*.

But however that be, this is certain, that if they who are Christians will not demean themselves as the Servants of Christ, if they will not consider and actually return to their Duty, perish they must ; there is no help for it : For when they have said all they can for themselves, God, who knows their Hearts, and what Means and Opportunities they have had, but have neglected, will infallibly punish every wilful and impenitent Sinner according to his Desert. I might enlarge upon this Head, but it is time now to turn my self the other way, and to shew in the Fifth and Last Place.

V. That immense Reward which attends the sincere Performance of our Duty.

If

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*If any Man serve me, says Christ, him will my Father honour.* Blessed Lord! What abundant Encouragement is here given to thy faithful Servants and Followers from these comfortable Words of Thine? Hast Thou said this, O Gracious Master, and will not all those who profess thy Faith and Religion, be eagerly ambitious of this Honour? Will any that have so vast a Recompence in view and prospect, chuse to seek and follow after any other? Or think it worth their while to make their Court here below, to these fading Honours, these tarnish'd Glories, which the Men of this World so much admire? Silly mistaken Creatures! What is there in any, nay, in all of them, that should tempt us from our Master's Service, only for the sake of a few vain, empty and insignificant Titles? Did we but rightly know our selves, and understand our best Interest, we should despise these gaudy Trifles, and should quite disrelish the grosser Delights and Satisfaction of Sense: We should then mind Religion and the weighty Concernments of it, and should make these the main Pursuit and Endeavour of our Lives: We should fix our Thoughts and our Affections chiefly on things above, and should be continually wishing for and aspiring after those invaluable Rewards, those Glories and Honours, *which eye hath not seen,*  
*nor*

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*nor ear heard, neither have enter'd into the Heart of Man to conceive.*

These indeed are the proper Recompences of our Fidelity and Constancy, and they are the highest and noblest that our Nature is capable of: And tho' these in the main are future only, and in reversion, yet Religion usually gives us something in Hand beside; and that is the present Payment which every one that Lives well, doth one way or other receive.

The World, 'tis time, is generally very bad, and the Wicked are by much the greater Number, however Virtue and true Goodness do very seldom fail of Respect even among those. But suppose the worst to happen that can, and that Wickedness should every where prevail, and Impiety get the upper hand, still the faithful and sincere Christian is sure to be taken care of however; our Lord hath promised it, and we have good reason to depend upon his Word; for he is a great Prince, and one that hath all Power at command, and so is continually in readiness, whenever he pleases, to right and vindicate his distress'd Servants. But if after all we should suffer a while here, let none of us be discourag'd thereat, since Christ hath Honours and Preferments enough to bestow upon all that shall suffer in his Cause, and upon his Account.

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This is a very encouraging Consideration to us all, and which ought to animate our Hopes, and excite our Ambition, not after earthly Honours and Advantages, which too often betray us, but after those bright and dazzling Crowns, which are reserv'd in Heaven for us. 'Tis the want of a right apprehension of these Matters, that makes us so indifferent about our best and weightiest Concernments. Did we but know how to value these as we ought, we should pursue them with far more Zeal and Earnestness than we commonly do. And O that we were all of us so wise as to understand our own Happiness, and would effectually be persuaded to *seek the Honour that cometh from God only, John 5.44.* For 'tis certain none but that can stand us in stead, none but that can make us truly honourable.

And therefore whatever befalls us here, let us always appear on the side of Religion, and let us endeavour to rescue it from the exceptions and cavils of unreasonable Men. And so much the more, because whenever that is attack'd or injur'd, the Honour of our Great Maker is then concern'd, which we must be sure to vindicate, or must expect to be disown'd and discarded by him. The Words which our Saviour spake to this Purpose are very remarkable, *Who-soever shall be ashamed of me, and of my Words,*



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*Words, in this Adulterous and Sinful Generation, of him also shall the Son of Man be ashamed, when he cometh in the Glory of his Father with the holy Angels, Mar. 8. 38.* This is a terrible Sentence indeed, and therefore we should do well to consider how far any of us may be concern'd in it: Whether at this very day, even in this *adulterous and sinful generation*, whenever we hear the Son of God revild in his Person, or ridicul'd and evil spoken of in his Laws and Doctrine, if we are silent and passive on such an occasion, he may not then justly reckon us as *asham'd of him and of his Words?*

The Sum of all is this: If we will own Christ for our Master, we must then serve him to the utmost of our Power; we must espouse his Interest, and maintain his Cause against all Opposers whatsoever, against the *Theist*, and the *Unitarian*, the *Blasphemer*, and the *profane Person*, against the *Common Swearer*, the *Drunkard*, and the *Lascivious*: All which are one way or other, either in Principle or in Practice, the avowed Adversaries of Christ, and of the true Christian Faith and Religion. This, if we consider, is as little as any of us can do, so long as we profess our selves Servants to the Blessed *Jesus*, all whose Commands ought to be dearer to us than our very Lives.

And

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And since Christ our Lord hath strictly charg'd all Men, of all sorts and degrees, without Exception, to shun the Ways of Sin, and the Paths of Iniquity, let us contest this Matter with our selves, and with all our might strive against the force and bent of our evil Inclinations and Passions. Whatever Difficulty there may be in the Attempt, still Duty and Obligation ought to take place here. Let us not take upon us to dispute or cavil at any of his Commands, but let us readily comply with them all whatever they be, and be thoroughly satisfied that it is our Interest, as well as Duty, to fulfil and obey them.

Let us not think any thing too hard or too dear to part with for his Sake, who hath shew'd himself the best Friend and the greatest Benefactor to Mankind that ever was. And so much the rather, because in return to those manifold unspeakable Advantages which he hath procured to us, all that he expects or requires from us, is, that we constantly maintain and practice his excellent Religion, whatever Contempt or Hardship we may meet with from the World.

In a word : Tho' Vice and Profaneness have got many powerful Advocates on their side, yet let not that be any discouragement to us while we have Christ on ours. The Cause which we undertake is in  
it

B2 *Two Sermons Preached, &c.*

it self highly honourable, and at this Jun-  
cture the most necessary of all other. The  
things that we contend for are Truth, Virtue  
and Religion, the best, the most valuable in  
themselves, and the most deserving of our  
Zeal and Concern. Christ is our Master and  
Lord, and as his Servants we appear, we  
strive, we oppose: Let us be found true to his  
Service, just to his Interest, and zealous  
for his Honour, and then that God who  
hath said, *them that honour me I will  
honour*, shall translate us into his own most  
Glorious Kingdom, and shall actually Re-  
ward and Honour us to all Eternity.

*Almighty and Merciful God, of whose  
only Gift it cometh, that thy faithful People  
do unto thee true and laudable Services:  
Grant, we beseech thee, that we may so  
faithfully serve thee in this Life, that we  
fail not finally to attain thy heavenly Pro-  
mises, through the Merits of Jesus Christ  
our Lord. AMEN.*

In a word: Tho' Vice and Profaneness  
have got many powerful Advocates on  
their side, yet let not that be any discon-  
fidence to us while we have Christ on  
ours. The Cause which we undertake is in

A SECOND  
SERMON

Preach'd against

*Immorality and Profaneness.*

DEUT. xxxii. 6.

*Do ye thus requite the Lord, O  
Foolish People and Unwise ?--*

**T**Hese Words are part of that Prophetick Song which *Moses* composed, and which he tells us he *spake in the Ears of all the Congregation of Israel*. Here in a kind of Poetical Strain he sets forth the Goodness of God, and the Perverseness and Disobedience of the People: And being shortly to leave the World, he Summons them together, and rehearses this Song for a Testimony against them, if so be they should

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hereafter turn aside and forget their God, as he foresaw they would.

Alas, so very deceitful is the Heart of Man, so prone to Evil, and so averse from Good, that the wisest and best Instructions can make but little Impression upon it: Tho' Moses here saith, *my Doctrine shall drop as the Rain, my Spirit shall distil as the Dew*, yet from so corrupt a Root, so cold and barren a Soil, scarce any fruit or increase was to be hop'd, for such was the unhappy Temper of that People, so weak their Judgment, and so perverse their Will, that the Prophet seems to give them up for lost. *They are*, says he, *a Nation void of Counsel; neither is there any Understanding them*, ver. 28.

And indeed what Wisdom, or Understanding, or Counsel, can any People or Nation be said to have, when once they have cast off God and Religion, and are sunk into all manner of Wickedness and Vice? That is a sad and deplorable Case indeed, and which will bring swift inevitable Ruin upon us, if we do not betime think our selves in time, and return to a wiser and better Mind. Which is the best thing that we can do, and the only certain way for us to escape the Danger? Whereas while we are thus Unmindful of *the Rock that begat us*, and do thus forget God that *form'd us*, we have reason to expect that he

will



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will rub up our Memories, and will, to our cost, make us feel the weight of that Displeasure which we refused to stand in awe of.

I say we have all just cause to fear that, because as this kind of behaviour is the worst sort of Ingratitude, so it is moreover a very high Dishonour to God, and a downright Contempt of his Majesty and Laws. *And do ye thus requite the Lord, O Foolish People and Unwise?*

In discoursing upon which Words I shall endeavour to make out these *Four things*.

I. The Baseness and Ingratitude of a Sinful and Irreligious Course of Life.

II. The gross Absurdity and Unaccountable Folly of such a Course.

III. The evil Consequences which attend it with respect to Men's private Interests and Concerns.

IVly, and Lastly, As it is Destructive of the Welfare and Prosperity of any Nation or People.

I. The Baseness and Ingratitude of a Sinful and Irreligious Course of Life.

The Obligations we lye under to God are Certain and Unquestionable, whether we take the light of Nature, or the brighter Discoveries of Revelation for our Rule and Guide. Either of which doth plainly shew Impiety to be Baseness and Disobedi-

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ence the utmost Ingratitude. Thus several of the Heathens, tho' they had only the dim light of Reason to direct them, could nevertheless discover the necessity of Obedience to the Will of God: Which made one of them to say, *Virtue, Philosophy and Justice, are but the sound of empty Words: 'tis only a good Life that can make Men Happy, Sen. Ep. 123.* But then as for Revelation, that indeed hath made our Duty, and the several Obligations of it, so plain, that Men must be utter Infidels if they reject it. So that upon either of these Accounts no pretence of Ignorance whatsoever can excuse Men for their Disobedience or Unbelief. For as *Moses* saith in the Words immediately after the Text *Is not he thy Father that hath bought thee? Hath not he made thee, and establish'd thee?*

And indeed whoever considers God under the Notion of a Father, hath all the reason in the World to honour and obey him: Because for any one to call him so what is it but at the same time and in the same words to acknowledge him as the Author of his Being, the Preserver of his Life, and the Founder of all his Happiness. I shall therefore consider God in these three Respects, any of which doth exact from us all possible Obedience and Service. And,

I. As he is the Author of our Beings.  
Did we not Live in an Age that call  
ever

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every thing, how certain soever, in question, it might seem needless to Vindicate the truth of this Proposition: But since Infidelity is become a sort of Profession, and Atheism begins to gain Profelytes amongst us, 'tis surely high time to appear for God, and to assert his Being and Sovereignty over the Sons of Men. And the rather, because wicked Men have been, and still are very Industrious in corrupting the Minds of unwary People: The Poyson hath been long prepar'd and dispersed abroad in Books and Pamphlets, and the ill Effects it hath produc'd are visible in the Lives and Manners of too many amongst us. Never perhaps in any Age did Sin and Wickedness more generally abound; at best never was less Zeal shewn in the Exercise of Devotion, and all other instances of Piety and Religion, than in these unhappy Days of ours. And yet when I have said this, it can't however but seem very strange, that in a Nation where Christianity is truly profess'd, there should any be found so desperately wicked as to disown their Maker: Because to do that is a most flagrant Crime, 'tis the very height of Impiety, and Men must first abandon their Reason before they can arrive at it.

Since it is God therefore that hath bestow'd a Being upon us, since *it is he that hath made us, and not we our selves*, shall

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we be so highly Disfingenuous, so heinously Ungrateful, as to dishonour at least, if not deny him, by the open looseness and viciousness of our Lives? Suffer me a little to expostulate the Matter, not to upbraid but to convince you. Is God our Father, and can we find in our Hearts to carry it thus undutifully towards him, and seem at least by our Actions, as if we had a mind to cast him off, and disown all kind of Relation to him, and Dependance upon him? Again, hath God made us only that we should serve and enjoy him, and to that End hath given us a reasonable immortal Soul, and several excellent Faculties and Endowments, whereby we are enabled to do him Homage, and shall we, ungrateful Creatures as we are, employ these Gifts of his, upon the very worst things, in the gratification of our Lusts, in the service of our Sins and Follies, in the discountenancing of Virtue, and in neglecting or despising every thing that is Commendable and Praise-worthy? This must needs be a great Reproach to us as we are Men; and had we any the least sense of Duty or Gratitude, we could not but inwardly abhor and condemn our selves for it. 'Tis true, we may flatter our selves now, and think whatever we please, but we shall assuredly find at one time or other, that this kind of behaviour is the highest Indignity, the basest

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basest Ingratitude that we can possibly be Guilty of.

But then as God is our Maker ; so,

2. Is he our Preserver also. As God of his Goodness first brought us into Being, so doth he by his Providence still continue the same unto us: For that according to the Apostle he *upholdeth all things by the Word of his Power, Heb. 1. 3.* And not only so, but as we are his Creatures, he is graciously pleased to provide for us, and freely to dispence to us not the Necessaries of Life only, but the Comforts and Conveniencies of it too. He it is that takes care of us and our Concerns, and that keeps us in all our ways: 'Tis his good Providence that Watches over us, and that Defends and Guards us in all Dangers. 'Tis his Blessing that constantly brings us in Provision, and supplies our Store, and that makes *our Corn, and our Wine, and our Oyl to increase.*

These and such like are the good things which come down from above, and which we may make a right and proper Use of, if we please. But, alas, 'tis so far from that, that altho' God be thus Kind and Indulgent to us, yet how Ill is he serv'd by too many of us? How perverse commonly is our behaviour towards him, and what a wretched requital do we make him for those many Favours and Blessings which



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we receive? Nay, tho' they are all his Gifts that we subsist upon, yet for the most part so disingenuous are we as to misemploy and abuse them.

Thus in times of Prosperity, when by the divine Providence we are made Rich, how apt are we to forget or slight our great Benefactor, and upon our *being full to deny him, and say, who is the Lord?* Prov. 30. 9. When we are in Possession of all that our Hearts can wish, instead of acknowledging his Kindness as we ought, we presently grow either Covetous, or Sensual, and are so far from using what we have to the best Advantage, that is, to the Glory of God, and the Relief and Benefit of others, that perhaps we will not use it at all; or if we do, 'tis chiefly in the service of our Lusts and Vices. 'Tis with these his Enemies that we take part, and rebel, and fight against him; 'tis by these that we break his Laws and violate his Commands; by these we affront his Goodness, reproach his Name, disparage his Word and Truth, and do the most we can to bring Religion it self into Contempt. In short, tho' it be in our Power to do Good, and to live like Men, yet we chuse rather to abuse his Creatures, till by so doing we debase our Nature, and become like unto the Beasts that perish.

3 As God is our Maker and Preserver,  
so

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so likewise is he the Founder of all our Happiness. The Consequence of which is, that there is no possible way for us to be happy without God. That both the thing it self, and the way to it, and the qualifications for it, are all from him : When we had lost our Integrity, and had forfeited our Happiness, even then God was pleased to have pity on us, and receive us again into Favour : And the better to encourage our Obedience, which is the Condition that he requires from us, he hath graciously Promised to reward us with Eternal Life. So that it Concerns us all, as we desire to be Happy, to understand our Duty, and to Practice it; to forsake our Sins, and amend our Ways : And in order to that, to curb our unruly Wills, to regulate our Passions, govern our Affections, and to subdue and mortifie our Lusts. In a word, we must endeavour so to change our corrupt Nature, as to become better Men, and better Christians too than I doubt most of us are. This is what we must all resolve to do, because the very Nature of Happiness doth require it : But if we will try other Experiments, and will seek for Happiness in our own way, we shall one day be convinc'd of our Mistake, but then it will be too late to correct it: Which brings me to the Second Thing I propos'd to make out, *Viz.* The gross Absurdity and unaccountable Folly of a wicked Life.

II. Eve-

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II. Every vicious ungodly Person is liable to the imputation of Folly, and that because he puts a notorious Cheat, a most shameful Abuse upon himself. His whole design is to serve his Lusts, to humour and gratifie his Senses: He makes no account at all of his better Part, nor shews any regard to the Dignity of his Nature: He considers not what is Proper and Necessary for him to do, but follows the motion of his Will, and the byass of his deprav'd Inclination. He hath made a blind and wretched Choice, and is resolv'd to pursue it, let the Issue and Consequence be what it will. This is the way that the Wicked take, and *this their way* in the Psalmist's Language *is their Folly*, *Psal. 49. 13.* For since Religion was design'd to make Men first Good and then Happy, what greater Absurdity can there be than to indulge corrupt Nature, and to place our Happiness in that which is our Reproach and our Danger too?

In the Account of the World, that Man is generally reputed a Fool, who Acts contrary to his plain visible Interests, and that only in temporal Matters, and the Affairs of this present Life. If he manages these untowardly, and to disadvantage, there is no escaping the Censure of others: How much rather then is *he* to be accounted such, who wilfully deceives himself, and quite

quite mistakes his main Point, I mean the Happiness and Salvation of his Soul.

Hence it is that wicked Men are so oft in Scripture branded with the reproachful Name of *Fool*. In one place they are said to be *Children of Fools, viler than the Earth, Job 30. 8.* The reason is, because Sin by its tainting Quality doth debase them to the last degree of Vileness and Corruption. And elsewhere 'tis said, *Have all the workers of Iniquity no knowledge? No Judgment nor Consideration of things? And again, Fools, because of their Transgression, and because of their Iniquities, are afflicted, Ps. 107. 17.* And Solomon tells us that 'tis abomination to Fools to depart from Evil, *Prov. 13. 19.* In all which, and several other places, we are to understand by *Fool*, not the Idiot, but the Sinner; not the Natural, but the wilful Fool; one that Affects and Chuses to be such when he may be otherwise. In short, 'tis the giddy, rash, unthinking Person, he that rusheth blindly on, and so considereth not in his Heart, neither is there Knowledge nor Understanding in his Head. It is this stupid senseless sort of Men, upon whom the wise Prophet bestows this Character, *They have not known, nor understood; they have shut their Eyes that they cannot see, and their Hearts that they cannot understand, Isai. 44. 18.* This is a miserable State indeed,

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deed, but then it is every Man's fault and reproach too, if he fall into it. For since Happiness or Misery is sure to be our Portion hereafter, accordingly as we demean our selves in this Life, what egregious Folly is it, if instead of pursuing our main Business, and that for which we came into the World, we only trifle away our time, or which is worse, spend it in an idle fruitless course of Sin and Vanity.

If we would act like Men and reasonable Creatures, we must propose to our selves some End, which if attain'd to may be sufficient to make us Happy. Now 'tis certain nothing can ever make us so, but only the Service of God, and the Practice of Holiness and Virtue. We may try other Experiments if we please, and so come to pay dear for our Folly at last: But that is the approv'd, certain, and only infallible way which never yet deceiv'd any Man. Reason, and Knowledge, and Understanding, are all on the side of Religion, and do all Recommend and Assert it. Religion is the best and most valuable Enjoyment of all other; 'tis the great Rule of our Actions, and the chief Ornament and Perfection of our Nature. In a word, 'tis of that Importance to us in every Respect, that we can neither be Wise, nor Virtuous, nor Happy without it.

Vain surely then are their pretences to  
Wisdom



Wisdom and Knowledge, who know not God, nor his Service, nor his Laws: For whatever else they may seem to understand, yet if they are Ignorant or Regardless of these, they can never deserve the title of *Wise*: For to be *Wise* is to be Religious, and consequently whoever thinks to arrive at Wisdom any other way, is engag'd in a Mistake, which will effectually prove him to be a Fool in the End. Again,

2. Another Instance of the gross Ignorance and Folly of wicked Men, is that fond mistaken Notion, which most of them have entertain'd of worldly and sensual Delights! 'Tis here that their Hearts and Affections are engag'd, 'tis here they expect to find not only their Ease but their Happiness too. But what a shameful piece of self-deceit are these Men Guilty of, and how wretchedly do they cheat and abuse themselves, while they pursue these False Phantastical Pleasures, these Imaginary Joys. While for the sake of some beloved Sin, some bosom darling Lust, they not only lose all that peace and satisfaction of Mind, which is certainly to be found in the ways of Virtue, but moreover expose themselves to the stings and upbraidings of a guilty Conscience. Which whenever it is thoroughly awaken'd, as it will be one time or other, is sure to vex and torment them :

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them: For then the Pleasure, whatever it was, is vanish'd and gone, and there remains nothing but trouble and disquiet, horror and remorse, which so gall and distract their Minds, that they know not which way to turn themselves. None of their former Methods are now able to divert them; neither the Amusements of Wit, nor the Charms of Wine, nor the Gaiety of Mirth, can entertain or relieve them. So true is that Observation which the Prophet *Isaiah* makes, *The wicked are like the troubled sea when it cannot rest, whose Waters cast up mire and dirt: There is no Peace, saith my God, to the wicked.*

But beside that inward regret and anguish which Sinners create to themselves, and which gives such disturbance to their Minds, how do they languish many times under bodily Pains and Diseases; so that *their bones are pierced in them in the Night-season, and their Sinews take no rest.* *Job 30. 17.* As *Job* expresses it, Thus one Man drinks himself into a Fever or a Drop-sie, another is tortur'd with the Gout or Stone, and a Third pines a way of an Incurable Loathsome Distemper. These are very often the Effects of a loose and irregular course of Life: But alas, so besotted and senseless are most wicked Men, that they never consider the Consequences of  
their

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their Actions : Whatever Inconveniencies they are like to endure, whether Poverty, or Disgrace, or Sickness, or even Death it self, they still hug and caress their Vices, and pursue their Debaucheries : They will not refrain their lewd intemperate Courses, tho' thereby they break their Strength, and destroy their Health, and ruin their Constitution, so that at last whole troops of Diseases seize upon them, and they go down with rottenness to the Grave.

And now, all things consider'd, is not this a fine discreet way of managing things? What! are these the marks and properties of Wisdom, and are such Men to be accounted the only refin'd and improv'd Wits of the Age? On the contrary, to speak yet plainer, is it possible that such Folly, or rather Madness as this is, should pass for Sense and Reason and Understanding? Or that a Course of Life which is so Prejudicial both to Soul and Body, should ever come to be so universally engag'd in? And yet as unaccountable as the thing is, how many are there in the World, who tho' they live at this vile abominable Rate, are so far from thinking the worse of themselves for it, that they rather take a pride in being Extravagant, and Glory in being distinguish'd for their Vices. As if there was no Sense but in sinning, and no Reason like that of living like Beasts.

From

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From what has been said upon this Argument, 'tis, I hope, pretty plain that Religion is the truest Wisdom, and that Sin and Vice are nothing else but downright Ignorance and Folly. That wicked Men, as wise as they take themselves to be, are all grossly mistaken, that the Principles they proceed upon are False and Groundless, and that their Practices are utterly inconsistent with the Dictates of right Reason, and the Laws of Sound and pure Religion. This is what I have endeavour'd to prove, tho' I am sensible when all is said, wicked Men may still plead in behalf of their Vices, and may deceive themselves if they please, and too many I fear have so little Sense as to do so: But yet when live as if there was no God, and do every thing in Contradiction to Reason as well as Religion, surely then 'tis no hard Matter to prove them to be void of true Understanding.

David I remember in one place hath this Expression, *The Lord looked down from Heaven upon the Children of Men, to see if there were any that did understand and seek God*, Ps. 14. 2. Which Words seem to imply, that Wisdom and true Piety, tho' they are different in Terms, are yet in Effect but one and the same thing: And Consequently that none but good Men, and such as *seek* or fear God  
and

and regard his Service, can in a proper Sense be said to *Understand*. The like was spoken also by *Job* long before. *And unto Man he said, the fear of the Lord, that is Wisdom, and to depart from Evil is Understanding.*

Thus I have shew'd at large the Ingratitude and the Folly of a sinful course of Life. I come now in the *Third* place, to consider the evil Consequences which attend it with respect to Men's private Interests and Concerns.

3. Great and manifold are the Mischiefs which attend the practice of Sin and Vice, and so close and constant is the attendance, that no Man thus engag'd but is sure to have a share of them. To prove which I might appeal even to wicked Men themselves, whether they have not experienc'd in some Measure, more or less, the sad unhappy Consequences which these produce: Whether the Sins and Enormities they are Guilty of, have not done them some real sensible Prejudice: Whether they have not either wounded their Conscience, or blasted their Credit, or brought some outward Calamity and Disaster upon them? 'Tis true indeed, some Sinners may and do escape better than other, because the evils of this Life do not happen to all alike: Tho' some for their Sins do meet with quick and speedy Disappointments,

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yet



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yet others are seen to flourish still, and make a glorious shew, till at last some odd unlucky chance, some unexpected fatal stroke dashes all their greatness in Pieces. When that happens, then is that Sentence of Zophar verified, *Tho' his excellency mount up to the Heavens, and his Head reach unto the Clouds, yet they that have seen him shall say, where is he? The Eye also which saw him, shall see him no more; neither shall his Place any more behold him;* Job 20. 6, 7, 9.

Many and various are the Instances and Ways in which the evil Consequences of vice Appear. I shall at present mention but these Three. 1. That of our Reputation. 2. Our Estates. And, 3. Our particular Callings.

1. As to our Reputation in the World. That I Confess is a very true and tender Point, and most Men pretend to a more than ordinary Concern for it. Nay, there is hardly any Body so dissolute, so void of all sense of Honour or Virtue, but will express some kind of Resentment, some Concern at least, whenever that is Attacqu'd or Question'd. And yet were that in truth as dear to some Men as they say it is, certainly they would take more and better care of it than they do. Had they such a desire to be well thought of in the World, they would not surely expose themselves to Censure:

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sure: They would not transgress the rules of Decency, Modesty and Sobriety, nor break in upon the Obligations of Truth and Justice: They would not Swear, and Curse, and Blaspheme, and be guilty of the vilest Practices, as they too commonly are. Such Men perhaps may look great in their own Eyes, and fancy themselves priviledg'd to do as they please: But still while they demean themselves at this rate, are sure to appear Contemprible to every Body else: For as the wise Man rightly observes, *Who will Honour him that dishonoureth his own Life?*

Many 'tis certain there are who will talk much and loud of their Reputation, and will assert it too sometimes very unreasonably; but for all that are content to part with it almost at any Rate, and as if they were weary of keeping it, will Sacrifice it, to the next Temptation that comes in their way. Alas, so little regard have Men now-a-days to their Reputation, that they rather seem to put it to sale, and for fear lest they should lose their Market, are willing to let it go at any Price: A small sum of Money, or a thin gust of popular Brearh, or any the most sordid Vice, is able to purchase it.

Some again are very shy and reserv'd in their outward Behaviour, and while they suspect that others observe them, are a-

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fraud to take the least step amiss: These Men, the better to conceal their ill Designs, have put on a Mask of Piety, a Form of Godliness, but never consider that such Artifices, such Disguises do but render them still more deform'd. The truth is, every Body almost is aware of them, and knows their Practices, and hates to be imposed on by fair Outfides, and specious Pretences: Beside that so odious, so detestable a Sin, is Hypocrisie, that Religion it self doth still suffer on Account thereof.

But whatever others do, let all of us resolve to maintain a clear Reputation, an unblemish'd Character: 'Twill be of unspeakable Advantage to us in most of the Concerns and Duties of Conversation: Let us therefore cherish it with the greatest tenderness and care, and let us strive to establish it, not by talking much of Religion, or pretending highly to it, but by the sincere, constant and uniform Practice of it. Let our Zeal for God and his Service shine forth in all our Actions, let it appear bright, but not too glaring, for that is sometimes found to do rather Harm than Good. This is the only way to Preserve or Increase a good Reputation where it is, and effectually to retrieve it when it is unfortunately stain'd or lost.

Consider again what a mean contemptible thing it is to be either Vicious or Unjust,

just, and what a grievous Scandal it brings to the Christian Profession: And therefore be careful to eschew all manner of Evil, especially the too common and fashionable Vices and Corruptions of the Times, and not barely to eschew, but as occasion offers to reprove them too. Discourage as much as in your lyes, all Profaneness and rash Swearing, all kind of loose, obscene or atheistical Discourse: Reject the enticements of Lust and Intemperance, and if at any time you are tempted thereto, say to your Acquaintance or Companions, as David did on the like Occasion, *Depart from me, ye evil Doers, for I will keep the Commandments of my God. I am a Companion of all them that fear him, and of them that keep his Precepts, Psal. 113. 115. v. 63.* But more especially, as you value a good Name, a fair Reputation, take that friendly Advice of his Son, *Enter not into the Path of the wicked, and go not in the way of evil Men: Avoid it, pass not by it, turn from it and pass away.*

2. In respect of our Estates. That Sin and Wickedness have a fatal Influence upon these is plain even to a Demonstration. Sometimes a Curse is entail'd upon our Possessions, which secretly descends to Posterity; then it is that the Innocent but Unhappy Inheritor can neither Enjoy that

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Wealth, nor secure that Inheritance, which at first was rais'd by Injustice or Oppression. But the mischiefs of Prodigality are much more Sensible to us, we see plainly the many and great Inconveniences which attend that way: How Mens Follies and Extravagancies do prey upon their Estates, and make them moulder away so fast, that nothing but Shame and Contempt is to be look'd for, and Poverty which comes upon them *like an armed Man*. This is the natural result of Luxury and Profuseness, which are Sins now very rife and common amongst us: The Consequence of which has been and still is the ruin of a great many Families and Estates. But before I dismiss this Head, I cannot but take notice of one very common, but withal very mischievous Custom, and it is that of *excessive and immoderate Gaming*. Which as it is now-a-days practis'd by too many, is such a fruitful complicated Evil, as deserves to be severely Censur'd by the Laws. However, all I shall move is, that if Men will not Consider what they do, they may even thank themselves for the Event; since they have nothing to complain of but their own vain Humour, their Carelessness, their Vices and Impieties, which are of themselves sufficient to undo them, but oftentimes the Judgment of God strikes in, and so makes their Misery certain and unavoidable.



3. In respect of our particular Callings. That Religion is highly serviceable to these Ends no Body can doubt, that will but consider what an immediate dependance these have upon the blessing of God, which is more than all the Care and Industry that Men can possible use. For except that second and prosper their Endeavour, *it is vain for them to rise up early, and sit up late, and eat the Bread of Sorrows, Psal. 127. 2.* In vain do they Project and Contrive to better their Fortune or increase their Store. So that if any such Person be a bad Man, a loose and careless Laver, unmindful of his Duty to God, and regardless of his Worship and Service, no wonder then if his Custom fails, his Trade decays, and all, even his most promising Designs, miscarry. For upon what Ground can such a one expect to thrive, or look that any good Success should attend his Hopes and his Cares?

If on the other Hand, to serve some little Ends and Interests of his own, he takes up a Form of Godliness, and appears a Zealous and Devout Christian, but at the same times does very ill Things, is perhaps a false and unjust Dealer, and makes no Conscience to defraud and over-reach in Buying or Selling, that Man after all his demerit is a gross Hypocrite, a downright Knave. And if that *his wickedness be sweet in his Mouth*, as *Job* speaks, so that he will

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not repent of and forsake all such dishonest Practices, he will soon find to his Sorrow that he has indeed Cheated many, but his own Foolish wretched self most of all.

The Sum of what has been said is this: That Irreligion and Vice are very pernicious things, and do in their own Nature tend to the prejudice of Mens temporal Affairs: That 'tis for want of due Consideration that Temptations gain upon them, and they are so often carried down the stream of bad Example: That 'tis a great Unhappiness they do not see their Errour, and are not sooner convinc'd of the Danger that awaits them: That were they once made sensible of that, they could not but Condemn themselves, and wonder how they came to be so mistaken: That were they but so Wise as to Discern their true Interest, they would quickly see the folly of Injustice and a wicked Life, and what a plain palpable Absurdity it is to do any thing contrary to Truth, Reason, Honour or Conscience.

I might here go on to shew what farther Mischiefs may and do Actually arise from a general Dissoluteness and Depravation of Manners, particularly in the ordinary Business and common Transactions of Life. What a bad Influence it hath upon the Advantages of Society, and how apt it is to untie the Bands of Friendship, to destroy mutual

tual Fidelity, and consequently to create Mistrusts and Jealousies among Men. For when they come to observe how little Regard is had to Religion, they presently conclude, and with good reason too, that all things are running to Confusion, and that no heed at all is to be given to what any Man says or declares, seem he ever so serious and reserv'd.

Indeed when all is done, 'tis Religion alone that makes Men fit to be trusted, 'tis that which breeds a generous Confidence, and which maintains a friendly Correspondence between them; when therefore Wickedness doth so prevail, that neither Religion nor Conscience is regarded, what Suspicion and hard Censure is that like to produce? Where then is the Man whose Word will be taken, or whose Faith is to be relied upon: Nay, what Ground of Assurance can others have, but that after the fairest Promises, the most solemn Professions, they may come to be deceiv'd by him at last? These and many more Inconveniencies will unavoidably befall us, whilst Impiety and Profaneness, and every other sort of Vice is suffer'd to abound.

I might likewise shew how our Sins and Vices tend directly to divide us, whether in Opinion or Affection, and consequently do touch and wound us in the most sensible Part, I mean the Honour and Safety of  
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our Mother the Church, which is now so miserably Torn and Rent in pieces by Faction and Schism. But I shall wave this Argument, and proceed to shew in the *Fourth* and last Place,

IV. How destructive Impiety is of the Welfare and Prosperity of any Nation or People.

Now for the Proof of this particular Point, what need we any other Instance than that of the People in the Text, which is very Remarkable. God had Born long with that Stubborn, Disobedient and Sinful People, but after all the Essays which he had made upon them for their Good, they still continued to do wickedly, and *walked in the Counsels and in the Imagination of their evil Heart*. Great and Clamorous were their Sins, and such as had Provok'd God to a just and a severe Resentment? *Therefore*, saith he to the Prophet *Jeremy*, *pray not thou for this People, neither lift up Cry nor Prayer for them, neither make Intercession to me, for I will not hear thee, Jer. 7. 16.* God had now fix'd the date of their Calamity, To that no Intercession should move him to avert it: He saw there was no likelihood at all of their Repentance and Amendment, and therefore he had determin'd to Chastise and Punish them to purpose: And to that end he rais'd up a potent Enemy against them, who with a mighty

a mighty Force invaded their Country, seiz'd upon their Possessions, and carried the greater part of the Inhabitants away into Captivity : Of which Calamity and the Cause of it God himself assures them in a solemn manner, *Hear, O Earth, behold, I will bring Evil upon this People, even the Fruit of their Thoughts, because they have not hearken'd unto my Words, nor to my Law, but rejected it.*

*They have not hearken'd unto my Words, nor to my Law,* said God to the Impenitent *Jews* : That was his Complaint and Charge against them, and that likewise was the sole Cause of their Misery and Desolation. And now that God was thus Angry with his own People, and did so severy Punish them for their Transgressions, have not other Nations, whose Sins and Iniquities abound, as much reason to fear the like Judgment and Severity? Yes, most undoubtedly : For do we not find that the same or like Sins and Provocations have ruin'd Cities, destroy'd Kingdoms, and laid waste several Great and Flourishing Churches, even since the days of Christianity? Thus it hath far'd with those false Christians, those unprofitable Servants, those slothful and wicked *Husbandmen*, who were long since cast out as well as the *Jews*, and that because they took not sufficient Care of their Lord's Vineyard.



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*yard. The Kingdom of God, as our Saviour speaks, hath been taken from them, and given to others that should bring forth the Fruits thereof, Matt. 21. 43.*

These and such like Examples of Divine Vengeance are enough, one would think, to Startle us, if we have not lost our Senses, and to put us upon endeavouring a speedy and thorough Reformation. That is the thing we want, and that which our Circumstances plainly require; and the rather, because nothing but that can do us any Good, nothing but that can preserve us from Evil. 'Tis not long, if we remember since our Fears were upon us, when God's Hand was lifted up, and the Stroke was just falling upon us: Then indeed we Sigh'd, and Mourn'd, and shew'd some Signs and Tokens of Amendment, but no sooner was the Danger remov'd from us, but we presently fell to our old Sins again, and soon became as Bad or Worse than we were before. Surely to behave our selves thus after so great Mercy, is double Ingratitude, and who can tell but that the Guilt of it is already put upon the Nation's score?

No Man certainly knows whether the Sins of this Nation be yet come to a Crisis, so as to be ripe for public Vengeance; however thus much any Man may see, that 'tis high time to put a Stop to that Torrent  
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of Wickedness which is breaking in upon us, and which nothing but a Discreet and and Resolute Zeal is likely to Oppose. So that if we have any Kindness for our selves, or for those that shall come after us, we must immediately resolve upon other Measures: If we have any value for our Religion, our Government, our Liberties and Laws, we must do all we can to discourage Impiety, and bring Vice to open Shame. As we desire the Continuance of these our Enjoyments, which cannot but be dear to every one of us, we must be Vigorous in Promoting so Great, so Glorious, so necessary a Work. Which if we are Backward or Unwilling to Engage in, let us consider what the Consequence of that Neglect must be, and what a Reproach it is we should Live as we do, *Quiet, and Secure, and Careless*, of all that is Good: Like the Inhabitants of *Laiſh*, when, as 'tis said, *there was no Magistrate in the Land that might put them to Shame in any thing*, *Jud. 18. 7.*

We are Intent enough most of us upon the things of this World, Riches and Honours, and Pleasures, and nothing can Discourage us in the pursuit of them, but we commonly leave Religion to shift for it self: That, 'tis plain, is the least of our Care, unless it be to Wrangle and Dispute about it, which oft-times we do to the Hurt and

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and Reproach of it. The thing is very certain, and all good Men are concern'd to see it, that the Interest of Religion declines daily amongst us; but then where is the Fault and Misfortune of that to be charg'd? Is it not upon the Coldness of some, and the ill Lives of others, who Profess it? If we would in good Earnest Secure or Promote the Welfare of Religion, the best way to do that is to practice it, and then we need not fear that either Popery or Fanaticism will gain much Ground upon us. Let us therefore do something for our own Safety, for the Honour of God, for the Publick Good, something towards *the healing of the Nation*, that so God may be reconcil'd, our Sins pardon'd, and we become a Prosperous and Happy People.

On the contrary, let us be assur'd that if we still persist in our Impieties, our good Things will all vanish and come to nothing: That very Liberty which we are so tender of, will become a snare to us, and will at last end in Slavery and Oppression. Consider how God threaten'd the Jewish Priests, *If he will not hear, and if ye will not lay it to Heart, to give Glory unto my Name, saith the Lord of Hosts, I will even send a Curse upon you, and I will curse your Blessings, Mal 2.2.* In like manner, if we the sinful People of this Land will not Hear, and if we will not lay it to Heart, so as to  
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fear God, and give Glory to his Name by a sincere and timely Repentance, then will he be Angry with us, and ~~will curse our Blessings~~ also. All outward worldly Comforts will then fly away, our Peace and our Plenty will both forsake us, and either some Foreign and Powerful Enemy will invade us, or else we shall fall out, and divide, and crumble in pieces amongst our selves, so far as an Aspect hath Irreligion upon the Welfare and Prosperity of any People.

For the End therefore that both Church and State may Continue and Flourish amongst us, let us take care to amend our Lives, and Reform our Manners, that so God our great Benefactor may have no cause to complain of us, as having conferr'd so many Blessings and Mercies upon a Disobedient and Unthankful People. That God hath of late appear'd so Eminently in our behalf, is a sign that he hath a Kindness for us, and will still Watch over us for good, if we by our Perverseness do not force him upon other Methods. It is our part therefore so to Qualifie our selves as to be capable of his future Favours: *He hath shew'd us what is Good, and what he doth require of us, which is only to do justly, and to love Mercy, and to walk humbly with our God.*

To conclude; I question not but all sober thinking Men will agree with me in this:

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this: That where-ever it is that Atheism, Irreligion and Contempt of Godliness are seen, there nothing but Disorder and Confusion is to be look'd for: On the other Hand, that where-so-ever it is that Virtue is encourag'd, the Honour of God and of Religion maintain'd, and every kind of Vice effectually discountenanc'd, there will the Divine Providence appear as a sure Guard and invincible Security. There shall Peace and Tranquillity, and Abundance be found, and nothing shall interpose to Vex and Annoy: Nor all the Power, nor all the Malice of the World, shall ever be able to Undermine that Society, Overturn that Government, or Dissolve that Church which stands upon so firm a Foundation.

And is not this the true and only way of securing the Church and State from all such dangers? And is not this the only way of securing the Church and State from all such dangers?

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